



**ST. GEORGE AND ST. ANTHONY'S
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**OTTAWA –
CANADA**

3

**THE GREAT JUBILEE
OF THE SECOND THOUSAND YEAR
FOR
THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST
AND
*THE ETERNAL LIFE***

THE JUBILEE AND ETERNITY

The jubilee according to Moses' Law was celebrated as a shadow of the heavenly jubilee, which in fact it is the eternal life itself. Thus by celebrating the jubilee, we are sharing in the heavenly glory. Through the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ or His first advent we realize the true jubilee instead of attaining its shadow. The Lord, who is the **Real Jubilee**, grants us the right to receive Him within us. Thus the Lord has changed our hearts into His own kingdom. **The Lord's advent is considered as a revolution in the concept of the Heavenly Jubilee or of eternal life. Through it we experience the pledge of eternal life and the hope of attaining its fullness.**

THE JUBILEE AND THE CONCEPT OF ETERNITY

Before the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, it was too difficult for man to acknowledge eternal life and to taste its joy. The people of God who were like little children only experienced the temporal blessings. God encouraged them to be close to Him by many temporal blessings (Deuteronomy 27). The phrase "everlasting life" is found in the Old Testament only once (Dan. 12:2). But the idea of eternal life is implied by the prophets in their pictures of the glorious future promised to God's people.

For the Gentiles, the majority could not accept the eternal life as reality, and even those who were guided by their own natural law, and who received an oral religious tradition descended from Adam believed that eternal life would be in this world in a very material way. This belief can be seen in the ancient Egyptians who were cautious to preserve their corpses and store food beside them.

Those who believe in eternity conceived it in a merely negative form of the non-temporal, or immeasurable time, and not positively, as the mode of the timeless self-existence of the absolute ground of the world to come.

They also believed that there is a kind of contrast between Eternity and Time.

The Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ subjected Himself to Time, and entered in the history of mankind. He reconciled eternity and time. Now eternity and time are not to be thought of as unconnected. He presents Himself to us so that we may acknowledge eternal life and experience it acting in our actual lives. Thus we acknowledge the following realities:

- **In Jesus Christ the eternal life was manifested**, “For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (I John 1:2). We truly can say, “He is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:27-28).
- **The pledge of the eternal life is at hand**, as we enjoy participation in the spiritual and divine life (2 Peter 1:4). The life of heaven is none other than the divine life which God’s grace imparts to believers here below; only it is developed and brought to perfection. None will ever obtain eternal life hereafter unless he receives it in this life. St John emphasizes that the eternal life abides in the true believers: “this life is in his Son” (I John 5:11). “You have eternal life” (I John 5:13). “You know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (I John 3:15).
- **Union with God is eternal life**, and separation from God is eternal death.
- **Time is a bridge through which we taste eternity and pass to its fullness.** Time is a precious gift granted to us by the Eternal One who became Man for our sake. St. John emphasizes eternal life as the present reality and the present possession of the Christian (John 3:36; 5:24; 1 John 5:13). John declares that the Christian believer has already begun to experience the blessings of the future even before their fullest expression: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).
- Of that eternal life **the Incarnate Logos of God is Himself the guarantee.** “Because I live, you shall live also” (John 14:19). **St. Augustine** says, "Join yourself to the eternal God, and you will be eternal." This life is nothing less than “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). It is a new birth from above (John 3:3; 1:13), and is dependent upon receiving Christ as our Savior. “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:12).
- St. Paul says, “Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:19). Observe that this precept is preceded by another, “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12). **Those who lay hold on eternal life will have to fight for it.** When we hear, “Lay hold on eternal life,” we do not imagine that this is to be done in a dream, or accomplished without arousing our utmost energies, nor even then without that divine assistance can receive.
- Eternal life is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit within the heart through baptism. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). It is by the new life wrought of the Spirit that we enter the kingdom. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, we are quickened and raised from among the dead. We have the experience of the joy and glory of the resurrection with Christ while we are struggling in the spiritual battle. This life is one of high enjoyment. Truly it is a life of battle and of strife against the old death; but it has all the elements of heaven. It brings us into communion with the Ever-blessed One.
- **This eternal life which we hold now is not static but dynamic.** It increases by growth. Zealously we grasp more and more of it by the divine grace; for Christ has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. He that have much life have the promise of more. We may covet earnestly this heavenly treasure, asking of the fullest measures of eternal life, receiving grace over grace and going from strength to strength. The apostle tells Timothy to seek after everything that would promote his eternal life saying, “Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim 6:11). Seek after that which will exercise and develop your highest life.
- The eternal life that we attain is **the adornment of our life**, regardless our position or rank in our work, society or the Church. We can change our life into an eternal song, and a pleasure to God and the heavenly hosts.